

**Communications and Message
Recommendations**

from the

**Roundtable of Provincial
Social Services Organizations**

June 4, 2010

Introduction

The Roundtable of Provincial Social Services Organizations saw the need to develop a consistent set of messages to communicate with the public and decision-makers who we are and what we do.

These messages can inform paid advertising, public speaking and news media opportunities, lobbying activities, communications with employees, with clients, with the general public in materials published both virtually and in print.

The more we use the language and positioning that will move our audience where we want them to be consistently across the sector in our daily work, the more effective that language and positioning will be at shaping public opinion of our sector.

The community social services sector is facing unprecedented harm in the face of cuts and underfunding. This effort represents an unprecedented desire to work together to deliver the same message.

This plan specifically answer the following questions:

Objectives: what do we want our communications to help us achieve together?

Audience: who do we want to talk to?

Desired audience outcome: where do we want them to be at the end of the day?

Brand, framing contrasts and messages: what do we have to be, and what do we have to say to get them there?

Key facts: what makes our brand and message believable?

Strategic and tactics: how will we deliver our brand and message?

This summary is not intended to be a comprehensive review of all the issues.

It is recognized that no single message can clearly encompass every nuance, detail and aspect of the entire scope of what our member organizations do.

The goals are to simplify how we talk about who we are, what we do and why it's important. We want to focus on delivering a few key messages that can be repeated often and cut through the clutter.

1. Communications objectives

We have refined our primary objectives:

- ▶ develop a consistent message that can be used across the sector
- ▶ change what the public thinks of the social services sector
- ▶ show how what we do is as critical to the public as health and education
- ▶ define the problem and the solution – not just criticize

Our desired tone of the messages is:

- ▶ positive on the value of community social services to everyone
- ▶ negative on the losses people are experiencing due to cuts in services, funding shortfalls and government decisions
- ▶ not personal against government leaders but clearly holding decision makers to account for their actions

2. Our communications challenges

What kinds of challenges do we face to get more people to see the community social services sector the way we want them to see us?

- ▶ how do we appeal to what people value most about community social services and help them grow their perception of that value?
- ▶ how do we persuade audiences that the value of strong community social services is a greater priority than ensuring a balanced budget during a recession? ... that they will lose more if services are cut?
- ▶ how do we communicate the diversity of the community social services sector while keeping our persuasive message clear and memorable?
- ▶ how do we contradict the government claims that they are protecting services for children, families and the vulnerable?
- ▶ how do we help people see that the services we provide help them directly and indirectly in communities throughout BC?

3. Audiences

Our target audiences include people who *can* be won over to seeing the benefits of community social services. We are not trying to win over people who will never see the benefits of our work.

Target persuadable audience:

Public opinion research tells us that we are most likely to be able to move the following groups with our messages:

- women, particularly those that are at the stage of life when they are responsible for the care of others – children or aging parents
- families
- seniors
- low to middle income
- communities throughout the province, small and larger

But these demographics only tell a portion of the story of who we are trying to reach.

Lifestyle and behaviour factors our audience may have:

- busy with many responsibilities (work, family, extended family)
- worried about money, stretched finances, “How will I pay the mortgage?”
- watching the top of TV news only, reading the headlines in the newspaper only
- using Facebook and ‘offline’ social networks to connect to others and get information
- don’t have the money for extra costs when fees go up
- don’t have a lot of time, working harder and longer hours
- needing services when times are tough but not thinking about where they come from

Attitudes and opinions our audience may have:

- family is the most important thing to them
- feeling cross-pressured – they want to spend more time with family but feel pressure to work more to earn more money
- worry about job losses / security for the future

- feel life has changed drastically recently – “I was set up, now I’m not so sure I’ll have what I need to send my kids to college / retire.”
- concerned about health and education cuts, schools closed, surgeries cancelled
- worried about pensions, paying for kids to go to college, their bank account and bills, finding and keeping care for loved ones, their health, kids’ activities, and aging parents
- comparing their lives to government spending and waste
- seeing taxes as going away from their paycheque vs. resources they receive
- fed up with politics / think politics is irrelevant to them
- angry and frustrated with government
- feel alienated, or “tuned out” from government/decision-makers
- don’t feel they have the power to effect change
- less involved in their community
- believe you need to cut taxes to attract business (which their economic future depends on)
- see problems as overwhelming and without solutions
- don’t see how it makes a difference who is in power
- see how government spends resources as ‘tough decisions’ – they will do what they have to do so we’re not buried in debt

Internal audiences:

Internal audiences include people who can become additional messengers for our message. They expand our reach and offer credibility with different public audiences, the media and community networks.

- executive directors of member agencies – we need their buy-in to succeed
- boards of member agencies – they are community-based people with different spheres of influence, seen as credible because they don’t benefit directly from funding increases, have broad networks
- staff
- clients

4. Desired audience outcome

What do we want our audience to be thinking about the community social services sector and about the government's approach to our work and services if we are successful with our message, at the end of the day?

Defining where we want to take them helps us evaluate whether our campaign messages, strategies and creative executions are getting them there.

For the target persuadable audience - we want people to be thinking:

"There are many people in my community working everyday to provide a variety of community social services – to families, to children, to seniors, to people who need help at different stages in their lives."

"Many different kinds of people rely on community social services every day. When I need help for myself or my family (if I ever need help) I want to know that I can get it in my community."

"It's important for government to fund these services because they save money in the long run by providing services people need – so small problems don't become big problems. Cuts to these services hurt people now and in the future."

5.0 Strategic recommendations

5.1 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION:

Describe community social services consistently in relation to the people who benefit in all communications and add a descriptor to bring it alive – in every communication.

The challenge with the breadth of the group is that people don't understand what it is that you do and for whom. A descriptor is needed that humanizes what you do for people.

For example: "community social services, we're the folks who help families with kids with special needs. Community social services, we're helping women and kids escape violence," etc. You could develop one line for each sector and tack it on every time you use the phrase "community social services."

We may want to consider using a specific tagline for the sector as a whole, that speaks to broadening the benefits of the services you provide to everyone. For example, “Community Social Services – there when you need us.”

Consider a series of descriptors that can act as a summary. For example, “from kids with special needs, to counseling for addictions, to job training for people with disabilities.”

This recommendation means avoiding using the phrase “Community Social Services” by itself. But it also means adding in in front of every more specific description of the services our members provide. *See section 6.1 on the Community Social Services brand.*

5.2 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION:

Position community social service agencies as acting in the public interest by talking about the *benefits* community social services provide our audiences, or the *harm* caused to our audience by cuts and underfunding.

Community social services alone are too general for most people. The word ‘sector’ means nothing to the general public. Our communications are more relevant when we talk about specific harm or benefits: what’s happening to people? What can’t you do for them now that you used to be able to do? What services will they not be able to find tomorrow if things don’t change?

5.3 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION:

Position community social services as providing the kind of early intervention that costs less in the long term – for people who use the services, taxpayers, businesses, seniors, youth, families, people with disabilities, victims of violence, everyone! Assert this as a fact – don’t hesitate!

Community social service workers who do X, Y, Z, help make your life better, easier and more affordable. The services you need you’ll pay for one way or another (in taxes or in fees). These services are part of an infrastructure that supports the whole community – social, economic, health. Community social services save money by reducing the burden on more costly interventions – such as ambulances and emergency rooms, prisons and police, hospitals.

5.4 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION:

Position cuts and underfunding of community social services as taking something away from average folks. And contradict government claims of protecting 'core' services by exposing specific cuts and underfunding and their consequences.

People lose when X, Y, Z services are cut in our community. Cuts to community social services are taking away our ability to look after the most vulnerable, they are taking something away from our kids, they are taking away something from our seniors.

6.0 Brand, framing contrasts and key messages

To shape public opinion over time, we need to define a choice for British Columbians. We want to define that choice on terms that are most beneficial to us and our objectives.

To be effective at persuading people and building support for our cause over time, we need our message to:

- ▶ be easy to understand
- ▶ be relevant to our audience
- ▶ strike an emotional chord
- ▶ be believable coming from us

We need it to tap into existing beliefs our audience has and build on those beliefs to shape where we want people to be at the end of the day. This takes time, consistency and strong leadership in delivering the messages.

Through consistent communication of these contrasting values whenever community social services are in the news, talked about on websites or at meetings, or published in internal or external materials, we build our own internal audience and public perception of these values.

Our problem is not that people don't value community social services when they hear about them and their benefits. Our problem is that they don't understand what community social services are doing in their communities and what the loss will be to people if these services continue to be cut back and underfunded. They don't understand their own connection to these services.

We're also competing with a belief that when faced with 'tough decisions' on balancing the budget, it's okay to cut community social services to save taxpayers money. That debt, deficits and taxes are that bad.

Our messages need to reestablish what's valuable about community social services and why they deserve protecting – particularly in bad times.

6.1 The Community Social Services brand value

How we describe ourselves needs to tell people who we are, what we do and how that matters to them.

By linking the name "community social services" with the more tangible benefit to specific people, your name starts to mean more to people. They begin to see how what you do affects them, their community, their family.

"I work in community social services, and we do <name the more specific service> for <name the people> so that <name the benefit>."

The value of always linking community social services and the specific services or benefits is two-fold. The specific services have a larger overarching brand that shows collectively the strength and breadth of the sector as a whole. And the overarching brand gains a more down to earth, 'relevant to me' quality from the specific services.

The attributes of our brand that we want our descriptions of our work to leave people with are:

- ▶ there are many of us doing this work
- ▶ we are in every community in BC
- ▶ we work with children, youth, families, seniors, women, men
- ▶ the work we do makes life better – for people who use our services, for others in the community, for the whole province

6.2 Key contrasts framing:

The foundation of our messages is the contrasting values that serve our cause – that project the choice so that we are the best option.

These contrasts are recommended because they have been judged to:

- ▶ be unique to the community social services sector
- ▶ make the best use of our strengths and our opponents weaknesses within the current political environment
- ▶ appeal to the ideals and beliefs of our target audience

What we are working towards	What we are working against
Long term	Short-sighted
Support	Dismantle
Necessary / essential	Treating the services as if they are just luxury items (out of touch)
Responsible	Neglectful
Saves you money	Costs you more
Safety / security	Risk / Uncertainty
Community responsive	Just reactive

6.3 Key messages:

Our messages need to use our key contrasts to help frame every conversation we have about our sector and our services.

Here are narrative key messages that use the contrast framing to define the community social services sector and the government’s treatment of our services.

They also demonstrate how to pull together the framing contrasts with suggestions for specific stories to make the messages more tangible, believable and relevant to your audience.

More and more, people are relying on community social services for basic services such as _____. Cutting funding to community social services is a **short-sighted** decision we’ll be paying for for a long time. For example _(youth/prison)____. We’re thinking about the **long term** security of people in communities throughout BC. Government should be too.

Community social service agencies such as _____ are holding the social safety net together with a ball of string and some spit. Government has been systematically **dismantling** community-based services by cutting funding, asking us to do more with less – all as demand rises. More **support** is desperately needed now to keep the sector from falling apart.

Right now – as the economy struggles – demand has never been higher on community social services such as _____.

But government is dismissing our work as an **unnecessary frill** or a **luxury item**. How can I tell that to <describe a situation where a person needs your services>. To him/her, these services are **essential**. As important as hospitals and schools.

Who's being hurt most? Almost everyone is affected by cuts to community social services, but the reality is it's the most vulnerable who are hurt the most – people who don't have a voice, who feel powerless, who have no where else to turn. We can't stand by and let government **neglect** people who need help. We have a **responsibility** to speak up and let people know what's happening. **(responsible / neglectful)**

More and more, we can see that failing to provide these services at the community level costs both the people who need help and the taxpayer more, now and in the future. Example: Everyone talks about the rising costs of health care – what we do is helping to keep health care costs down by providing supports in the community and keeping people from ending up in ERs or hospitals. **(saves you money / costs you more)**

It's easy to think that community social services aren't about you – that they are about the downtrodden. But think again. Services such as _____ provide people who need _____. (repeat with as many examples as appropriate) The reality is, you never know when you'll need these services – when you'll need the safety net to catch you or your family. Risking losing services such as _____ isn't something most of us can afford. **(safety / risk - personal)**

Whether you or your family is directly affected today or down the road some time, community social services are part of the infrastructure of services that help provide all of us with **a secure future**. The BC government is slowly but surely chipping away at these services – making it harder and harder for people to meet the needs and **undermining** our communities. The results are going to be bad for everyone: businesses, taxpayers, families, seniors, kids, young people, people with disabilities ... **(security / uncertainty – economic)**

6. Key facts proving our message:

Each sector can develop specific validators that will make our messages real by defining concrete benefits of the work we do for our audience and answer the question "How does this matter to me?"

- ▶ What stories can we tell?
- ▶ What facts can we use?
- ▶ What visuals are available?
- ▶ Are they believable? Are they provable?

Ideally we will have three stories in each sector that can be repeated frequently as proof of the negative consequences to people of cutting or underfunding community social services. *We need to talk details of specific stories over and over and over again to be heard and remembered.*

- ▶ waits?
- ▶ understaffing?
- ▶ closure of services / facilities?
- ▶ loss of service areas?
- ▶ what can I no longer get in my community that I used to be able to get?
- ▶ where have they specifically tried to fool people / mislead people into believing things are the same or better when they are worse?
- ▶ how much more time and money does it cost me when services aren't there when I need them?
- ▶ how do we illustrate that once something is cut it's GONE FOREVER – long term damage?

Take a hard look at specific announcements and communications activities that don't reinforce key contrasts or move toward your chosen objective. Are you impeding your own message delivery?

Each story should answer the questions:

- ▶ what is the problem?
- ▶ what does it mean to people in the general community?
- ▶ what does it mean to people who use the service?
- ▶ what should be happening that isn't happening?
- ▶ what benefit would people receive if it was happening?

A consistent summary statement of how different community social services help certain groups of people would also help drive home what the services do and who they benefit (to be revised as needed):

- ▶ supporting families in crisis (and to stay out of crisis)
- ▶ helping seniors stay independent
- ▶ keeping teens safe and secure
- ▶ preventing violence against women and children
- ▶ providing supports for people with disabilities

7. Defining the messenger

People who are on the front lines delivering services are the most credible messengers when you're talking about the consequences of cuts and underfunding. The public sees them as having specialized knowledge of the situation and a genuine caring for the people being served.

People who receive the services are also excellent spokespeople. This is particularly the case when they can tell stories that show how their lives are similar to the general public's.

Board members have a particular potential as spokespeople as well. They are less likely to be seen as self-interested when talking about protecting community social services and what you do. They have ties to the community and to business that can help bolster our messages about community social services being important to everyone in the long term.

Ideally, our messages and messengers take advantage of all our strengths and combine them for good use.

For example, whoever is communicating on our behalf can connect themselves to the perspective of the front line deliverers of services as well as the people who receive them.

Here's a quote that anyone could say, whether they were a front line worker, client, a board member or executive director of an agency:

- ▶ *When you're constantly trying to do more with less, when you're understaffed and working overtime, trying to give people the best service you can, it's frustrating to hear the premier say he hasn't cut funding to community social services – when you know how funding cuts are dismantling the services so many people count on every day.*

8. Tactical recommendations

- **Message briefing**

We should share our message briefing package with all associated groups and encourage all community social services agencies to talk about community social services using the consistent messages.

In particular, we should consider a briefing for board members, executive directors and other spokespeople who might be doing community meetings or media interviews.

A 'contrast framing' wallet card could be developed to support consistent delivery of the contrasting frames, no matter what the issue.

- **Meeting tips and talking points**

A tip sheet for meetings with MLAs and talking about our issues in the community will help support ongoing lobbying efforts. We'd recommend broadening the audience to include other community leaders to get them on board as additional spokespeople. Using the messages and contrasts in this document will help us persuade more people if we use them in:

- letters to the editor
- media interviews on topical stories
- background briefings with media or stakeholders and decision makers
- cross organizational development within communities
- cable TV and talk radio opportunities
- in conversation with board members
- in newsletters and other publications
- on the website and in social media chatter

- **A news release template**

A news release template that includes tips for creating a news release that is both relevant to the audience, newsworthy and delivers the key messages of the roundtable will help support local groups in putting a frame around any new announcements in funding or service cuts in their community.

- **Everyday people testimonials**

To bring community social services and its benefits alive, Kerry Kang talks about how a community social service has made her life better in her community. We need the people who receive services to come forward to talk about how and why they rely on them. They can help with earned media and our own internal communications channels such as websites, newspapers, etc. On the flip side, when someone doesn't get the services they need, we want to capture those voices as well.

- **Cuts cost stories**

What people aren't getting, what harm is created, what damage is done to families, communities, seniors, children when services are cut or underfunded – all these things are just as compelling (or even more compelling) as the benefits people get when the services are there. These stories prove our claims that the government is shortsighted, dismantling, neglectful, costing us more, creating risk and uncertainty. We can't make our case without them.

- **Facebook and other social media**

The power of social media comes from its capacity to tell many people different human stories and to connect those who share similar interests with each other. The 'Everyday people testimonials' and the 'Cuts cost' stories can be shared as widely as possible through these media – using the tools of the contrasts, message and key facts.

- **Visibility campaign - Orange Hoodie Day**

People don't know that we're here or what we're doing in their communities. Let's take advantage of our numbers and mount a campaign to increase our visibility in the community – around the province. We make and distribute orange hoodies to all the workers in the sector with the words printed "Ask me what I do" on the front. On a specific day, we all wear the hoodies all day – doing our shopping, our work, our recreational activities. And when people ask what we do, we tell them "I work in Community Social Services, I do <name the service> for <name the people who benefit> so that <name the benefit>. I'm a <job title>." The Orange Hoodie day could be repeated later with additional cues and questions to get more use out the hoodies. A campaign activity like this helps humanize the work by connecting it real people in the community.

- **Other visibility ideas**

Visibility and extending the story can happen in a variety of ways.

Flash mobs or video contests encourage engagement and connection.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE - Generic

YOUR LETTERHEAD HERE WITH LOGO, ADDRESS ETC

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Today's date

HEADLINE ALL CAPS AND BOLD - WHAT'S NEW, CONFLICT, DAMAGE THAT WILL GET THE READERS ATTENTION? Paint a graphic picture if you can.

CITY OF NEWS – Your lead focusing on who is hurt or who benefits from what's happening. What does it mean to people? Look at your key contrast pairs - pick the one that works BEST for what's happened and use it to frame your lead. It doesn't have to have all the information in the first line - just the part that best backs up your key contrast framing.

"Your quote should explain further what the problem means to people. What do people agree on? How the government is getting it wrong and how you think it should be put right," said your frontline spokesperson, and their title. "Your quote to seek to show how this new announcement, fact or action fits in with your contrasts and key messages."

A narrative line can explain the story further. Is there a personal experience or anecdote to help illustrate your point? One or two key facts that prove your quoted message is true? Don't use more than three facts to back up your message - people won't remember them.

"Another quote here can expand what's happening now in your sector to the overarching issues affecting the community social services sector," said your spokesperson. "This is just one more example of what's happening in many places to many people who need many kinds of services (or replace "many" with specific examples).

"You can also use a quote from a third party to help prove your point. It's not only us who thinks this, it's people who are "neutral" but connected and informed on the issue," said your third party endorser and their title. "Keep their attack consistent in its contrast framing with yours."

Additional narrative details that are facts that must be included but aren't the main point of the news release. Any other detail should be provided in a backgrounder - not in the news release.

"Another quote can go here. To drive home the action you want to see happen and how it will make a difference for people in your community," said your spokesperson.

-30-

Contact:

insert the name of the people quoted and the media contact for your group, phone numbers, emails and when they can be reached.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE – Specific Issue

YOUR LETTERHEAD HERE WITH LOGO, ADDRESS ETC

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Today's date

CLAW BACK OF TRANSITION HOUSE FUNDING LEAVES VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE OUT IN THE COLD

CITY OF NEWS – Women and children who are victims of violence in communities large and small throughout BC are facing more risk and uncertainty as the BC government forces service providers to give up funding for necessary services to families in need, announced <NAME> Transition House.

“The BC government is treating services for women and children leaving violent and abusive homes like frills, instead of treating them as the essential services they are,” said NAME, TITLE of NAME Transition House.

“Community social service groups such as transition houses for women and children who are victims of violence in their own homes are increasingly doing more with less. We know these services are less expensive in the long term than costly ER or hospital care for governments, taxpayers and communities,” said NAME.

“It’s short-sighted to claw back these funds – when they could be doing so much more to keep women and children safe now and in the future,” said NAME.

The funds that have been clawed back would have helped women find jobs and safe housing for their families so that they can get back to a normal life for themselves and their children.

“You can also use a quote from a third party to help prove your point. It’s not only us who thinks this, it’s people who are “neutral” but connected and informed on the issue,” said your third party endorser and their title. “Keep their attack consistent in it’s contrast framing with yours.”

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-30-

Contact:

insert the name of the people quoted and the media contact for your group, phone numbers, emails and when they can be reached.

7 ways to persuade in your community

1. **Speak to people's hearts first.** The people we need to reach and move are more likely to believe that politics and government doesn't make a difference in their lives. But they can be moved when we show them how government decisions affect them, their families and their communities. The way in is not through their heads – it's through their hearts.
2. **Sound like a neighbour rather than an official.** What is wrong with government choices from your audience's point of view? What family member of theirs could they imagine being affected? What benefits are they losing? What would they be shocked to hear about? Speak to their world view and use language they would use, and they will hear you better.
3. **Tap into what persuades rather than just explaining the facts.** People have limited time and limited attention spans. Convincing them to see things your way is a three step process: 1. Tap into their emotions, find common ground, or show them you care about them and their concerns in order to connect with them first. 2. Then tell them what's wrong - what's the problem (from their point of view), and why is it happening. 3. Offer an alternative, or a solution for how it can be better.
4. **Relevant to voters = interesting to the media.** The media needs an audience in order to make money. Stories that are relevant, timely, and connect with people's everyday needs are their bread and butter. Your pitch should answer the questions "How does this affect everyday people? What harm is it causing? What benefits are we missing?"
5. **Stay friendly and open.** Even if people don't seem to agree with the value of your service, you may have planted a question that lingers in their minds.
6. **Letters to the editor get read.** This is the most-read section of community newspapers. And the free, local papers are the most-read publications. Use these tips to write a short, timely letter to your local paper.
7. **Listen and learn.** Listen to what comes up in discussion. You'll learn what is going on for your audience and how to tailor your message next time.

11 ways to have an impact with decision-makers

1. **Speak to the heart.** Decision-makers are still human. Showing how much you care, your honesty and dedication are persuasive as with anyone. And make the people you serve real, either in person or through stories and examples. It's hard to ignore the needs of a real person.
2. **Demonstrate that you know what everyday people want** and need. "People are telling me" ... "What I hear on the ground is" ... "This is the reality of what we are seeing" ... these statements put you in touch with the everyday people that politicians rely on.
3. **How is it relevant to voters and interesting to the media?** Much of the job of an elected official is to get media coverage and connect with voters. How is what you're telling them related to those audiences? You don't need to exaggerate, but make sure the relevance is clear.
4. **Keep it simple.** Elected people are busy and you need to get right to the point. Be prepared with numbers and answers where possible.
5. **Facts are important but they are not a message.** You need some facts to prove that your message is true. But the facts without a message can be interpreted many ways.
Fact: 500 children are on a wait list for this service in our community
Message: (What we are working for) We're trying to be **responsive** to these kids to make sure they get the **support** they need now so that are successful in the **long term**. (What we are working against) It's **shortsighted** to keep families waiting for these **necessary services**.
6. **Show how you will influence others.** Make it clear how many people you represent and how many people you serve. If your service is bursting at the seams, describe that. If you have a newsletter, magazine, website or email bulletin, make sure they know how you'll get the word out about your visit.
7. **Present your best case and listen closely.** Listen closely for objections and fine-tune your summary to address them. If you don't have an answer, you can follow up later.
8. **Don't be afraid to counter mis-information** and set the facts straight. Do this gently, eg. "Unfortunately you've not been given the full information. In fact services HAVE been reduced by 50% in this community."

9. **Don't fall for making their tough decisions.** Politicians have to make tough decisions with limited resources. But your job is to make the strongest case for the people you represent. Don't be pushed into choosing between needy causes – that's their job. One possible response: "My job isn't to make decisions for you. It's to advocate for people and make sure your decisions aren't made without important information I can give you."
10. **Keep a door open.** This isn't a one-stop train, it's a relationship. Invite decision-makers to learn more and keep in touch. Follow up afterwards and seek ways to build bridges.
11. **Write letters.** A printed letter written by a constituent gets noticed. Letters are better than phone calls or emails. Hold a letter-writing party to get several letters at once. Have paper, envelopes and stamps ready so they are actually mailed right away. Send copies to the opposition, too.
12. **Speak to how what you do fits with their goals.** Most decision-makers have a service plan or a strategy or goals they are supposed to achieve. If you know what their jobs is and can show how what you're advocating for fits with what they need to accomplish as well, it may help gain their support.